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National forest programmes

National forest programmes

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The Intergovernmental Panel on Forests/Intergovernmental Forum on Forests process recognized national forest programmes as useful broad policy frameworks for working towards sustainable forest management. The present paper provides an overview of the current status of national forest programmes, which are being implemented to varying degrees in about 100 countries. It highlights experiences in a cross section of countries. The issues and challenges facing countries in implementing national forest programmes are discussed, noting especially the problems facing developing countries and countries with economies in transition. A number of recommendations for consideration by the United Nations Forum on Forests at its second session are aimed at improving implementation of national forest programmes.

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I. Introduction

1. The present report is in response to the United Nations Forum on Forests multi-year programme of work, which, inter alia, calls for national forest programmes to be deliberated at each session as a common item. The purpose of the report is to provide a basis for deliberations at the second session of the United Nations Forum on Forests on the development and implementation of national forest programmes. Based on information available at the time of writing, it provides a preliminary assessment of progress in the development and implementation of national forest programmes, in line with related proposals for action of the Intergovernmental Panel on Forests (IPF) and the Intergovernmental Forum on Forests (IFF).

2. The report was prepared by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), in close consultation with the secretariat of the United Nations Forum on Forests and in collaboration with other member organizations of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests.

3. The Intergovernmental Panel on Forests and the Intergovernmental Forum on Forests concluded that national forest programmes are viable frameworks for addressing forest sector issues, including the implementation of relevant IPF/IFF proposals for action, in a holistic, comprehensive and cross-sectoral manner. It was also noted that, for the implementation of those proposals, national forest programmes could be used as a basis for development assistance to developing countries and countries with economies in transition.

II. Background

4. The conclusions of the report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Forests on its fourth session (see E/CN.17/1997/12, paras. 8-16) provide a general concept of national forest programmes. The proposals for action included in that report (mainly in para. 17 (a)) provide the agreed general attributes and principles of national forest programmes and additional considerations and dimensions of a national forest programme (see paras. 17 (b)-(i)). It was agreed that national forest programmes include a wide range of approaches for the achievement of sustainable forest management. National forest programmes should be based on national sovereignty, specific country conditions and national legislation, and should be consistent with national, subnational or local policies and strategies and, as appropriate, international agreements.

5. The Intergovernmental Panel on Forests emphasized the importance of the following guidelines for the development, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of national forest programmes:

(a) Partnership and participatory mechanisms to involve interested parties;

(b) Recognition and respect for customary and traditional rights;

(c) Secure land tenure arrangements;

(d) Holistic, intersectoral and iterative approaches;

(e) Ecosystem approaches that integrate the conservation of biological diversity and the sustainable use of biological resources;

(f) Adequate provision and valuation of forest goods and services.

6. The Panel recommended using national forest programmes as a basis for international cooperation in the forest sector. It also encouraged countries to establish sound national coordination mechanisms or strategies and further develop the concept and practice of partnership in the implementation of national forest programmes.

7. The Panel also encouraged countries to use criteria and indicators for sustainable forest management in formulating, implementing, monitoring and evaluating national forest programmes. National forest programmes may also assist in capacity-building, improve international cooperation and facilitate flow of official development assistance to developing countries and countries with economies in transition.

8. The experiences from countries show that national forest programmes are being developed and implemented in a variety of contexts and through different types of processes, depending on such factors as the macroeconomic context, level of socio-economic development, the government structure and the type and conditions of the forest resource. The development and implementation of national forest programmes are increasingly taking into account the IPF/IFF proposals

for action. In developing countries, policies, strategies and programmes related to the goal of reducing poverty and hunger by one half by 2015 are increasingly influencing the focus of all development efforts, including national forest programmes.

III. Current status of implementation

9. An overview of national forest programme trends and country experiences is provided below. This is followed by a description of regional, subregional and international actions that facilitate national efforts. The information is grouped by: (a) developing countries; (b) countries with economies in transition; and (c) industrialized countries. The intention of the present report is not to present each country initiative in detail, but rather, to summarize relevant aspects, with a view to describing a range of experiences.

A. Overview of trends in national forest programmes

10. In 1998-1999, 145 countries responded to a survey conducted by FAO on national forest programmes. Of these, approximately 100 indicated that they had reached the implementation phase, while others reported that they were in various stages of development. Table 1 indicates the status of national forest programmes by region.

Table 1
Status of national forest programmes in various regions

	Status of national forest programme		*Total number of national forest programmes*
Region	*Planning*	*Implementation*	
Africa	21	22	43
Asia	10	14	24
Near East	0	3	3
Latin America and the Caribbean	0	33[a]	33
Economies in transition	3	11	14
Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development	0	21	21
Total	**34**	**104**	**138**

[a] In Latin America and the Caribbean, out of 33 countries, 7 reported inadequate progress in their national forest programmes.

B. Progress in the development and implementation of national forest programmes

11. In this section, a brief overview of national forest programmes is provided for selected countries. The intent is not to evaluate these national forest programmes, but rather, to provide examples of the current situation at the national level in different regions.

Developing countries

12. National forest programmes in Asia are as varied in their approaches to forest management as the political and economic systems in the region. Most of the 14 countries that reported that they were implementing national forest programmes had initiated these activities in the pre-United Nations Conference on Environment and Development era. The typical national forest programme was started under the Tropical Forestry Action Plan or as a forestry sector master planning exercise with assistance from a financial institution such as the World Bank or Asian Development Bank.

13. The national forest programme of Viet Nam started as a Tropical Forestry Action Plan project in 1988. Today the National Five Million Hectare Reforestation Programme serves as an example of a major country-led effort in sustainable forest management that is specifically tailored to address national development goals. It is part of the Government's strategy to reduce poverty and gives prominence to the role the forest sector plays in this regard. Regular reports are provided to and decisions are made by the National Assembly and the Prime Minister. In addition, the Government of Viet Nam and the international donors have signed an agreement to develop the programme based on principles and elements of a national forest programme. A joint forest sector review was undertaken in 2000, with the involvement of all major actors, and led to the Forest Sector Support Programme that integrates and coordinates official development assistance and non-governmental organizations' support to government planning and budgeting. A special unit within the National Five Million Hectare Reforestation Programme Partnership secretariat has been created to coordinate the process and is jointly funded through a trust fund operated by the responsible ministry.

14. Issues related to mobilizing domestic resources and external financing and to establishing enabling conditions for private sector investment are being considered. In addition, management of forest resources by local actors is linked to the ongoing decentralization process and economic reforms. Stakeholders are working more closely together as a result of more open dialogue, greater access to information and participatory decision-making. The principal challenges include lack of resources, especially human resources; divergent expectations by different interest groups; difficulties in mobilizing participation of civil society and the private sector; and difficulties in implementing a decentralized approach without adequate subnational institutional structures. A systematic assessment of the IPF/IFF proposals for action has proven difficult.

15. In India, the Ministry of Environment and Forests has spearheaded the formulation of a National Forestry Action Programme. It is a comprehensive sectoral plan for the next 20 years, aimed at arresting deforestation and increasing the forest/tree cover to 33 per cent, as called for in the National Forest Policy of 1988. It also recognized the forest sector's role in environmental sustainability, agricultural development and poverty alleviation, and the importance of participation of local people in sustainable forest management. The formulation of the programme was completed in 1999 and it is being implemented.

16. The National Forestry Action Programme of India focuses on the issues to be addressed and programmes to be implemented for achieving sustainable forestry by harmonizing the activities of all parties involved, and highlights some of the issues a country based on a federal structure must face in developing such an approach. The document integrates elements from State forestry action programmes, formulated by the state governments, with well-defined intersectoral linkages that blend with the national development plans. A considerable amount of information has been generated during the State forestry action programme preparation process, including several forest sector reviews and special reports. National and regional workshops were held to consider the scope and content of the action programmes, and broad participation from stakeholders included.

17. Efforts are being made to mobilize resources, both from external and internal sources for implementing the National Forestry Action Programme of India and state governments have been asked to increase the allocation to the forestry sector.

18. The principal challenges in moving from planning to implementation revolve around adequate financial commitments, both internally and from the development partners. There is increased scope to strengthen the linkages between forest sector development and the broader objectives of poverty reduction, as reflected in India's priorities and in international agenda.

19. In response to the survey conducted by FAO (see para. 10 above), all countries in Latin America and the Caribbean reported having some kind of national forest programmes in their countries, albeit with different degrees of progress.

20. The forest policy and sector strategy of Costa Rica has incorporated many of the characteristics of a national forest programme, as defined by IPF/IFF, including: (a) broad-based participation; (b) decentralization of responsibilities; (c) economic valuation of forest products and services; (d) the development of market-based policy instruments; and (e) integration with broader environmental frameworks and land-use planning. Costa Rica has worked systematically to integrate many of the proposals for action in its national forest programme, especially those relating to the valuation of the environmental services of forests, and can be regarded as a pioneer in this area.

21. Recent efforts have resulted in the following main outcomes: (a) the forest policy has been updated, with participation of a range of stakeholders, and strategic priorities have been defined in a National Plan for Forest Development; (b) political parties and parliamentary groups have been involved in the dialogue on forest policy and strategy and, as a result, better understand the roles of various actors in the process; and (c) the forest policy and strategy have been integrated into the agenda of government and civil society, thus creating a programme which is practical and which corresponds to societal needs.

22. The main challenges in Costa Rica's national forest programme include: (a) institutionalizing the process to prevent it from the usual influences owing to political/election changes; (b) maintaining the momentum from planning to implementation; (c) continuing with awareness-raising and building

commitment at all levels; and (d) achieving financial sustainability.

23. In Brazil, the National Forest Programme was formally established in 2000 and was launched by the President of the Republic as a new policy and institutional framework for sustainable forest management. Consultations on the national forest programme process have already involved over 600 institutions representing forest producers, social movements, environmental organizations, universities, the private sector and different levels of government. The intent is to incorporate a number of IPF/IFF proposals for action into the national forest programme framework. The programme focuses on cross-sectoral action linked to national development objectives, with a view to moving towards the sustainable management of the country's forests. The short-term aim is to initiate appropriate action at all levels of the federal, state and local government. The medium-term goal is to consolidate the policy framework and to initiate a number of actions to reverse the unsustainable use of forests and stimulate socio-economic development. The long-term objective is to make all forest activities consistent with the "Forest Principles" from the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil in 1992.

24. The national forest programme in Brazil will address: (a) expansion of the area of planted forests; (b) improved management of natural forests on public areas; (c) improved management of privately owned natural forests; (d) monitoring and assessment; (e) issues related to traditional and indigenous populations; (f) forest education, science and technology; (g) valuation of forest environmental services; and (h) institutional strengthening and forest extension.

25. In Colombia, a number of federal ministries were engaged in the national forest programme process in order to facilitate cross-sectoral policy harmonization. The country has also achieved considerable success in mobilizing domestic funding for forestry and in attracting substantial loans from the World Bank and the Inter-American Development Bank.

26. In Africa, roughly half of the countries reported to FAO that they have started a national forestry programme planning process, while the other half have reached the implementation stage. However, none of the national forest programmes are adequately funded and every country in the region is hampered by inadequate human resource capacity. Participatory approaches are not well developed in many countries. Countries with civil strife are having the greatest difficulties in implementing their national forest programmes and are facing the highest deforestation rates in the world. For example, Burundi lost 40 per cent of its forest cover during the 1990s.

27. The Government of Malawi launched its national forest programme in January 2001. It is a strategic framework on which stakeholders have agreed on the priorities for the development of the forest sector. The Malawi national forest programme reflects many of the basic principles of such programmes, as defined by the IPF/IFF proposals for action. It is coordinated from within the Department of Forestry and guided by a broad-based National Forest Programme Forum. The process has been instrumental in demonstrating the extent to which forestry contributes to poverty reduction, as seen in Malawi's Poverty Reduction Strategic Paper, and sustainable livelihoods.

28. The Malawi national forest programme has also resulted in a number of changes, including: (a) reform of the national forestry budget process formed to reflect national forest programme priorities; (b) improvement of linkages between natural resources management, environment and poverty reduction; and (c) initiation of co-funding by partners through sector-wide approaches to harness synergies and reduce the administrative complexity of implementation. The national forest programme process is expected to lead to revisions in the Forest Policy of 1996 on such issues as the role of traditional leaders, flexibility in village institutions, approval of community bylaws, and the sharing of benefits in community forestry. The national forest programme process was initiated with the support from the Forestry Department, key non-governmental organizations, and some donor agencies. Today many more donors, non-governmental organizations and the private sector are making it the framework to guide their support to the forest sector, a feature unprecedented in Malawi.

29. The main challenges lie in ensuring that the momentum created during the development phase carries into implementation. There is a need to develop viable approaches to increase the involvement of the private sector and to decentralize authority. The establishment of a participatory monitoring system is also fundamental to ensure that the national forest

programme continuously evolves as a result of lessons learned.

30. The United Republic of Tanzania has, in recent years, embarked on a profound reform of its forest sector. The forest policy of the country was reformed in the mid-1990s through a participatory process to redefine the role of government, local communities and the private sector in sustainable forest management and to identify required institutional and legal changes. This led to a reformulation of the Tanzania Forestry Action Programme (developed in the late 1980s to early 1990s) into the national forest programme that was formally adopted in November 2001. The Tanzania national forest programme, like its counterpart in Malawi, attempts to engage all relevant actors in the dialogue on the forest sector and its future role. All major external supporters of the sector, both multilateral and bilateral, are now committed to channelling their future assistance through the programmes defined in the national forest programme, and the Government is taking a strong stance in coordinating external inputs in accordance with national priorities.

31. Major challenges include carrying through institutional reforms at the central government level, as well as decentralizing and privatizing authority for forest management. This will require major efforts in building the capacity of districts and communities, as well as devising effective policy instruments for private sector participation. Increasing the capacity of the sector for self-financing and moving towards a sector-wide approach, in collaboration with the donor community, also need to be addressed.

Countries with economies in transition

32. In many countries with economies in transition, the focus of the national forest programme process is on revising forest policy, legislation and institutional structures to bring them in line with the shift from a centrally planned to a market economy. Key issues include the restitution of the forest resources, revitalization of private forestry, new roles of the state institutions and other actors, design and implementation of appropriate financial incentives, and dealing with the social aspects of the change.

33. Of the countries that responded to the FAO survey, 11 reported national forest programmes in the implementation stage and 3 in the planning stage. In general, all countries in transition located in Europe are committed to the implementation of the Helsinki resolutions of the Second Ministerial Conference on the Protection of Forests in Europe (1993) and have initiated national forest programmes.

34. The Russian Federation, with the largest forest area in the world, provided the basis for its national forest programme process in 1997, when it adopted a new forest code. Like other countries with economies in transition, major issues include the need to establish and administer new institutional arrangements that would facilitate interaction between the state, which continues to own the forest resources, and the private sector.

35. In Latvia, the national forest programme process aims at: (a) involving civil society, non-governmental organizations and other stakeholders in the planning and management of the forest sector; (b) improving institutional arrangements for forests; (c) developing forest-related legislation in line with a market economy; and (d) carrying out strategic sector planning. Attention is being paid to such elements and principles as: participation, holistic and cross-sectoral approach and capacity-building. An inter-agency steering committee was established to coordinate the process and a task force oversees field activities. Some of the key challenges are: (a) defining effective strategic goals and programmes; (b) finding ways to enhance the competitiveness of the Latvian forest industry in international markets; and (c) enhancing the collaboration of the forest industries with education, research and finance.

36. In Slovakia, the emphasis is on the development of forest policy, strategy and legislation, and harmonizing them with relevant institutional arrangements in the European Union. New instruments were developed with the active participation of key stakeholders and surveys were carried out among forest communities and leaders in the public sector and civil society. The results were widely published and the general public was invited to provide inputs as part of the refinement process. The development of these instruments was intended to provide a basis for preparing the country's national forest programme. Special efforts were made to build capacity through intensive courses in forest planning for professionals engaged in the work. In addition, teaching materials were developed for use in professional degree courses at the university level. Another feature was the

development of a participatory approach to forest planning and programming which the government subsequently extended to the agricultural sector.

Industrialized countries

37. In 1999, the Federal Ministry of Consumer Protection, Food and Agriculture in Germany invited other federal ministries, the *Laender* and non-governmental organizations to participate in the development of a national forest programme. Derived from Intergovernmental Panel on Forests principles and elements, and building on the six-country initiative, entitled "Putting the IPF Proposals for Action into Practice" in support of the Intergovernmental Forum on Forests, the process is being implemented in a participatory and phased manner. The process involved (a) a scientific assessment of the relevance of Intergovernmental Panel on Forests proposals for action for Germany and progress in their implementation; (b) discussions with stakeholders on its findings and to set up procedural guidelines; and (c) further dialogue among stakeholders as a second phase for another two years.

38. The strategy of Germany to implement the IPF/IFF proposals for action builds on the experiences of the Federal State of Baden-Württemberg that served as a pilot in the development of Germany's national forest programme and the ensuing national forest policy dialogue. A similar state-level initiative has now started in Bavaria.

39. The main challenges centre on ensuring that the national forest programme: (a) is cross-sectoral in dimension; (b) is integrated into the national sustainability strategy; (c) is transparent and of high quality; (d) involves the broad participation of stakeholders; (e) is based on consensus and binding on the actors; and (f) is implemented by concrete actions with adequate resources.

40. Finland's national forest programme 2010, approved in 1999, continues the tradition of the country's previous programmes and builds on the New Environmental Programme for Forestry. It covers a wide range of issues, such as forest utilization from an economic, ecological, social and cultural perspective. In addition to domestic demands, the programme is designed to meet the new international forest policy norms. Developed through a process of broad participation by civil society, it is intended to address the concerns of the interest groups involved, as well as the general public. Prior to implementation, an environmental impact assessment was made.

41. The programme will be updated and monitored against changing demands and feedback on implementation. Apart from governmental actions, the programme is dependent on decisions and actions taken by the forest industry and forest owners. An elected and broadly based Forest Council, with several working committees, oversees implementation and follow-up. The Regional Forest Centres have also developed 13 subnational forest programmes in the same participatory manner and are in the process of developing criteria and indicators at this level. A key factor in the implementation and further development of the national forest programme is ongoing discussions on conservation areas.

42. Canada's National Forest Strategy (1998-2003), Sustainable Forests: A Canadian Commitment emerged from a series of cross-country public consultations and a multi-stakeholder review to further define and develop the concept of sustainable forests across Canada. It builds on the successes of the previous five-year strategy and pursues its vision. Nine strategic directions and 121 action items were defined by consensus by stakeholders. The Canadian Council of Forest Ministers, composed of the federal, provincial and territorial ministers responsible for forests, is public trustee of the strategy and ensures that progress is reviewed through independent panels of experts and reported. The National Forest Strategy Coalition, representing a wide array of forest interests across the country, oversees implementation and evaluation of the Strategy and reports to the Council.

C. Regional cooperation

43. Given the broad scope of national forest programmes, it is difficult to separate regional cooperation in the forest sector from support to national forest programmes. In this section several examples of regional cooperation are summarized.

44. FAO coordinates information about national forest programmes in three regions, namely, Africa, Asia and the Pacific and Latin America and the Caribbean. There is a full-time FAO national forest programme adviser located in each regional office to serve as an information broker, organize regional and

subregional networks and compile periodic summaries on the status of national forest programmes.

45. The six FAO regional forestry commissions also serve as a forum for networking and information sharing. The commissions meet every two years, when the heads of national forestry agencies in the region discuss current and emerging issues and topics of common interest, including national forest programmes.

46. In Asia, there are several regional bodies that support countries engaged in national forest programme processes, including the Asian Institute of Technology, the Asia Pacific Association of Forestry Research Institutions, the Asia-Pacific Forestry Commission, the Association of South-East Asian Nations, the Mekong River Basin Development Programme, the Regional Community Forestry Training Centre and Teaknet.

47. In Latin America and the Caribbean, four subregional bodies actively support processes to improve the management of forests, although they do not focus exclusively on national forest programmes. The Amazon Cooperation Treaty covers all 10 countries of the Amazon Basin and actively promotes regional processes in support of forestry and environmental plans with a focus on criteria and indicators. The Caribbean Community (CARICOM) continues to act as a channel for subregional efforts related to the formulation of national forest programmes. The Central American Commission on Environment and Development has a mandate from the Presidents of the seven Central American member countries to facilitate national forest programme formulation in the region, and coordinates the Central American Forestry Strategy. The Southern Cone Common Market (MERCOSUR) is a key player in the development of national forest programmes in the region and has a Centre for Forestry Development, formed by private sector members.

48. In Africa, regional cooperation related to national forest programmes has been on a relatively modest scale. However, some subregional organizations are providing support to their member countries in related policy areas. For example, the African Timber Organization, the Permanent Interstate Committee for Drought Control in the Sahel and the Southern African Development Community have participated in a number of subregional initiatives in the past few years, including seminars organized in collaboration with FAO. In addition, the African Academy of Sciences launched, in 1998, a project to offer training to key actors on the new paradigm in the forest sector of 16 African countries. The project also provides information and policy advice to other African countries to promote follow-up to in-country processes.

49. Three studies on the adaptation of national forest programme principles and guidelines in the different African subregions, covering Central, Eastern and Southern Africa and the Sahelian countries, have been completed in the past few years. Efforts to strengthen capacities through regional technical workshops continue with FAO coordination.

50. In Europe, the Ministerial Conference on the Protection of Forests in Europe has organized several workshops to discuss national forest programmes in the European context. These workshops have confirmed their importance as policy instruments for European countries and have helped to define the concept of national forest programmes for Europe more clearly. A draft paper on national forest programmes has been discussed at several expert-level meetings and will be on the agenda at the fourth Ministerial Conference in 2003. The Ministerial Conference has also facilitated discussion on related issues in Central and Eastern Europe.

D. Actions by members of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests and other international organizations

51. The actions carried out by the member organizations of the Partnership in support of national forest programme processes are described in the framework for the contribution of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests to the work of the United Nations Forum on Forests. Two of the major initiatives are highlighted below.

52. In addition to its support of national forest programmes at the regional level, FAO, in collaboration with different international cooperation agencies, recently developed a National Forest Programme Facility to support developing countries in the implementation of national forest programmes. Its main mode of operation will be capacity-building and information-sharing, including capturing local

knowledge. The Facility is supported by a number of donors and the participating developing countries.

53. The Programme on Forests is another major initiative that facilitates the development and implementation of national forest programmes and has been operating for four years. Previously hosted by the United Nations Development Programme and now by the World Bank, the Programme supports national capacity for the planning and management of forests and generates information on national forest programme processes and related issues, notably livelihoods, governance and financing strategies. Its current activities are focused on Cameroon, Costa Rica, Guyana, Malawi and Viet Nam.

54. FAO continues to provide support to countries which request assistance under the Technical Cooperative Programme. Recently, a number of developing countries and countries with economies in transition have used this support to initiate national forest programmes. The International Tropical Timber Organization provides financial assistance for a wide variety of projects in tropical producer countries, with an emphasis on capacity-building, which also complements national forest programmes. A number of bilateral and multilateral organizations also support national forest programmes in developing countries.

E. Issues and challenges

Developing countries

55. Diverse country conditions and national forest programme processes make it difficult to make general comments on issues, lessons learned and challenges. However, some commonalities can be found, especially at a regional level.

56. In Asia, constraints to the development of national forest programmes include:

(a) Limited awareness in many countries of the IPF/IFF process and its outcomes, which do not facilitate wide implementation of the proposals for action relevant to the national forest programmes;

(b) Reluctance on the part of some countries to embark on national forest programme processes, because of past experiences with lack of support, in particular financial support, from the international community;

(c) Lack of the capacity in many countries in public communication and participatory processes necessary to launch a successful national forest programme;

(d) Lack of relevant data and information on the sector, as well as on financial resources, which hampers the implementation of national forest programme processes.

57. In Latin America the main constraints include:

(a) Lack of the high-level political support needed to reform the forest sector in many countries. Most countries still find it difficult to engage decision makers, for example, in the Ministry of Finance or the Ministry of Agriculture, in effective dialogue on the cross-sectoral aspects of sustainable forest management;

(b) Weak public sector forestry institutions in most countries, which do not have much impact on issues within and outside the forest sector;

(c) Limited effective participation of civil society, especially the poor and the marginalized;

(d) Often outdated and incomplete data and information, which hamper effective planning and monitoring activities;

(e) High dependency by most Latin American countries on official development assistance, which is declining, to finance their national forest programmes.

58. In general, the African countries are facing severe constraints in the development of their national forest programmes. The same institutional, financial and political constraints that have been noted for the Asian and Latin American countries are even more pronounced. The historical dependence on external financing is a fundamental feature of the forest sector in Africa, making the need to streamline mechanisms for cooperation essential. Cross-sectoral impacts, especially those related to poverty and land use, are extremely severe in many African countries and their effective incorporation in national forest programmes has proven difficult.

59. Political instability in several areas in the region makes it almost impossible to implement effective national forest programmes in the affected countries.

Countries with economies in transition

60. The main challenges in countries with economies in transition include: (a) linking external support to internal leadership and initiation; (b) coordinating with other sectors and across sectors; (c) finding the right pace and scope for the transition process in each country; (d) engaging key actors; (e) receiving political support and backing; (f) providing sufficient communication, information flows and transparency; (g) systematically using experiences from other countries; (h) combining local experience and international knowledge; (i) defining clear tasks and functions to all actors; (j) developing criteria for evaluating implementation and instruments; (k) making use of innovative financing solutions and voluntary certification; and (l) building capacity and investment in human resources.

Industrialized countries

61. The European countries have, in general, a long history in formulating and implementing forest policies. The challenge is how to align these with the approach introduced by IPF/IFF. The draft Ministerial Conference on the Protection of Forests in Europe paper on national forest programmes summarizes the principal challenges as follows:

(a) Designing effective mechanisms for public participation;

(b) Employing holistic and cross-sectoral approaches which consider the impact of forestry on other sectors, as well as other sectors on forestry; creating national policies that are consistent with international commitments; raising awareness of forestry goals in other sectors; and building on instruments and mechanisms of cooperation;

(c) Instituting the national forest programmes as long-term iterative processes that build consistency and continuity of forest policies, adapt to changes in the environment and the state of knowledge and are based on systematic monitoring and evaluation.

62. In the draft paper, the Ministerial Conference regards capacity-building as especially important in Central and Eastern European countries and also emphasizes the relevance of the following elements and principles to Europe: (a) consistency with national policies and international commitments; (b) integration with the country's sustainable development strategies; and (c) synergies between international forest related initiatives and conventions.

IV. Conclusions and lessons learned

63. Countries have made considerable efforts to put in place national forest programme processes that are in line with the general definition and broad principles defined by IPF/IFF. The following trends are indicative:

(a) National forest programmes, in general, are long-term iterative and adaptive processes and their monitoring systems are increasingly being linked to the development of national criteria and indicators for sustainable forest management;

(b) Many developing countries are attempting to establish enabling environments for the sustainable development of the forest sector;

(c) Mechanisms have been developed for better cross-sectoral coordination and collaboration;

(d) New policies and instruments are proposed for structural reforms, sectoral self-financing capacity and private investment;

(e) Successful examples of broader participation by more stakeholders in the development of national forest programmes can be found in all country groupings;

(f) Decentralization and devolution of authority are key strategies, as is securing land tenure.

64. In sum, there is a growing trend towards countries implementing IPF/IFF proposals of action, including adopting the principles for national forest programmes and more progressive and participatory policies and planning. However, it is too early to determine the impact of these changes in terms of progress towards sustainable forest management.

65. Significant challenges are still encountered, especially by developing countries, in overcoming key cross-sectoral constraints, particularly those that require high-level political support. Further efforts are needed to improve linkages with broader agendas and instruments for poverty reduction, in order to secure adequate financing for the implementation of national forest programmes. Governance issues must also be addressed if progress is to be made in the decentralization and devolution of authority.

66. Countries can make better use of the national forest programme processes as a vehicle for implementing IPF/IFF proposals of action, not only those related to national forest programmes.

67. The availability of high-quality information and knowledge is key to effective participation and needs to be made available in a transparent manner to the broad range of actors involved in national forest programmes processes. Mechanisms for this are often still lacking.

68. The effective use of knowledge and information requires systematic efforts in capacity-building, especially directed towards those actors whose collaboration is critical to achieving sustainable forest management, including those who, thus far, have been marginalized. Information is needed on international forest-related processes and agreements, such as the Intergovernmental Panel on Forests, the Intergovernmental Forum on Forests, the United Nations Forum on Forests and the post-United Nations Conference on Environment and Development conventions, to facilitate incorporation of the outcomes of such processes and agreements into national policies and processes.

69. The resolution of the financial constraints faced by many developing countries and countries with economies in transition in the development and implementation of their national forest programmes, requires concerted efforts. New innovative multilateral efforts, including the Programme on Forests and the National Forest Programme Facility, are emerging as a mechanism to support the development of national forest programmes in a flexible and country-driven manner. These efforts need to be further developed and systematically monitored by the international community.

70. Member organizations of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests will continue to play a catalytic role in assisting countries to develop and implement effective national forest programmes. The National Forest Programme Facility promises to increase international support and coordination. In targeting support for national forest programmes in several key countries, the Programme on Forests, with support from UNDP, the World Bank and several bilateral donors, will also continue to play an important role. There is potential for more effectively mobilizing resources from other Partnership member organizations in assisting countries in developing and implementing their national forest programmes.

71. The conventional view of national forest programmes is that they are primarily planning exercises for forest activities of the public sector. This perception is rapidly changing as more countries recognize that the private sector is important in forest management and can be a major source of new financing. The need to increase private sector participation is especially pronounced in many developing countries, where the programme is poorly organized and lacks long-term vision. Specific efforts to improve the relationship between the private and public sectors should form part of the national forest programme process.

V. Suggestions for consideration by the United Nations Forum on Forests at its second session

72. The Forum might wish to consider the following elements as the basis for its decisions on facilitating the implementation of national forest programmes:

(a) Re-emphasize the importance of the cross-sectoral nature of an effective national forest programme, stressing interaction between the forest sector and other sectors in addressing such issues as poverty alleviation, sustainable livelihoods and economic development;

(b) Recognize the need to improve understanding of key thematic and process issues related to national forest programmes, such as governance, decentralization, sustainable livelihoods, poverty and financing, and the need to disseminate this information at the national and international levels;

(c) Urge countries to strengthen the involvement of civil society in national forest programmes, in order to address more effectively issues such as governance, empowerment and local capacity-building;

(d) Call upon donor agencies to channel their support for capacity-building through national forest programmes in developing countries and countries with economies in transition;

(e) Call upon countries to support the National Forest Programme Facility and the Programme on

Forests in their efforts to promote national forest programmes;

(f) Call upon countries to strengthen regional cooperation in information-sharing, capacity-building and other efforts to develop, implement, monitor and evaluate national forest programmes;

(g) Encourage countries to report on the development and implementation of their national forest programmes in their reports to the United Nations Forum on Forests;

(h) Invite FAO to carry out a comprehensive survey on the status of the implementation of national forest programmes and present its results at the fourth session of the United Nations Forum on Forests.